

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, IN

SUBJECT: US-INDIAN LABOR RELATIONS: VIEWS OF INTUC GENSEC.

1. EMBASSY LABOR COUNSELOR AND LABOR SPECIALIST CALLED ON
INTUC GENERAL SECRETARY G. RAMANUJAM DECEMBER 31
AT HIS MADRAS OFFICE. CONTRARY TO HIS USUAL RESTRAINED

MANNER, RAMANUJAM SPOKE SOMEWHAT EMOTIONALLY
ABOUT FAILURE OF US LABOR MOVEMENT TO SEND A DELEGATION
TO THE INTUC CONVENTION JUST CONCLUDED IN BOMBAY. HE
FEARED THAT THIS REFLECTED INCREASING INTERNATIONAL
ISOLATION OF AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS. BY CONTRAST,
COMMUNIST COUNTRY "UNIONS" WERE QUICK TO ACCEPT
INVITATION TO ATTEND THE CONVENTION, AND THIS WAS NOTED
APPRECIATIVELY BY SOME OF THE INTUC LEADERSHIP AND
DELEGATES TO THE CONVENTION. THERE WERE GIFT-BEARING
REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE USSR, BULGARIA, ROUMANIA, AND
THE GDR. RAMANUJAM POINTED OUT THAT THESE DELEGATIONS
WERE PRESENTLY TOURING INDIA, NOT EVEN BOTHERING TO
MAKE CONTACT WITH THE CPI-BACKED AITUC CONFEDERATION.
THERE WAS DISCUSSION AMONG THE INTUC LEADERSHIP AS TO
WHETHER LABOR

ATTACHES SHOULD BE INVITED TO ADDRESS THE

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CONVENTION IN THE ABSENCE OF FRATERNAL UNION DELEGATIONS.

(THE U.K., FRG, AND US SENT THEIR LABOR OFFICERS TO THE CONVENTION). HOWEVER, THIS PROPOSAL WAS STRONGLY REJECTED, AS THEIR PRESENCE WAS NOT CONSIDERED AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE FOR TRADE UNION DELEGATES FROM THOSE COUNTRIES. THE LEADERSHIP OF INTUC, RAMANUJAM CONTINUED, FELT THAT SINCE HE AND PRESIDENT BHAGAVATI HAD BOTH BEEN TO THE US, THAT AMERICAN LABOR WAS NEGLECTING INDIA. ELEMENTS IN THE INTUC UNFRIENDLY TO THE US WERE EXPLOITING THIS SENTIMENT AND MAKING THE POSITION OF PERSONS SUCH AS RAMANUJAM MORE DIFFICULT. RAMANUJAM STRESSED THAT THERE WAS A REAL BASIS FOR CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND INDIAN LABOR MOVEMENTS. WHILE GOVERNMENTS MIGHT CHANGE, HE BELIEVED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN GRASS-ROOT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS TRADE UNIONS COULD ENDURE AND THEREFORE MUST BE DEVELOPED AND MAINTAINED.

2. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO THE EMBASSY LABOR SPECIALIST WHO HAS CLOSELY KNOWN RAMANUJAM FOR THE LAST 15 YEARS, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HE HAS SPOKEN WITH SUCH CONCERN AND FEELING ABOUT US-INDIAN RELATIONS. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO SHARE RAMANUJAM'S VIEWS WITH AFL-CIO.
EAVES

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